

---

# Chapter 22

## Germany



---

## Climate and Grape Growing

Climate: Cool continental (*Baden slightly warmer*)

- Wet summers, drier autumns - elongates growing season
  - Good for Noble Rot (in every German winemaking region)
  - Varying annual weather = vintage variation
- Best sites = **sleep slopes (stony), S-facing aspect, maximise heat and sunlight**
  - Hand-harvested (any equipment manoeuvred by winches)
  - **Vines head-pruned, individually staked and canes tied at the top to maximise exposure to light/circulation of air** (protect against frost/rot).
  - Near river - sunlight reflected on grapes
- Wines classified by must weight (level of sugar in grape juice) - harvest is spread out. Pickers pass through several times during harvest (varying ripeness)

---

## Grape Varieties and Wine Making

*White varieties*

### Riesling

- Varies - different vineyards/soil types
  - Delicate/floral → richer, peachy fruit/dry → lusciously sweet
  - **Best dry Qualitätsweine labelled 'Grosses Gewachs' - GG**
  - Most Pradikatsweine = residual sugar
    - **Kabinett**
      - Most delicate
      - Light body/high acid/green apple/citrus
      - Sweet styles - 8-9%/Dry - up to 12%
      - Low quality = sweetened with Sussreserve. Better quality = stopping fermentation - better sugar/acid balance.
    - **Spatlese**
      - More concentrated/riper
      - Citrus/stone fruit/peach/apricot
    - **Auslese**
      - Wines made from individually selected extra-ripe bunches of grapes
      - Richer/riper than Spatlese
      - Noble Rot can play part in style
    - **Beerenauslese/Trockenbeerenauslese**
      - Noble Rot essential in achieving must weight

- Not always high vol every year
- Sweet/low alcohol/honey/dried stone fruit/candy peel
- **Eiswein**
  - Genuinely rare - varietal purity key
  - WM; use carefully selected yeast, handled carefully, no MLF or oak

### Other white grape varieties

#### Muller-Thurgau (Rivaner)

- Crossing (1880s) between Riesling x Madeleine Royale
- **Ripens earlier than Riesling - less acid/flavour**
- Floral/fruity - not high quality
- In decline as medium-dry/sweet wine grapes out of fashion
- 2nd most planted

#### Silvaner

- *Rheinhessen/Franken*
- Less acidic/fruity than Riesling - earthy flavour

#### Graubugunder/Rulander (Pinot Gris)

#### WeiBurgunder (Pinot Blanc)

### Black varieties

#### Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir)

- Warmer areas - *Pfalz/Baden*
- Dry and (a) light/fruity, (b) concentrated/oaky

#### Dornfelder

- Deeply coloured wines

#### Portugeser/Trollinger/Swarzriesling (Meunier)

- Light-bodied/fruity/intensely coloured/some oak
- Qualitätswein/domestic market

## Wine Regions

### Mosel

- Rhine → Rhine Mosel → German border (Saar + Ruwer tributaries)
- White grapes/*Riesling* (only grape allowed in GG)
- Middle Mosel (top quality) = **Piesport/Bernkastel/Wehlen**
  - Best sites - steep slopes/slate soil/by river
  - *Rieslings* - Lighter body/lower alcohol/high acidity/floral/green fruit
- Saar/Ruwer = few plantings - Middle Mosel best style
- Cool vintages - grapes can't ripen - go to sparkling wine production

## Nahe

- Between Mosel and Rheinhessen
- Best sites on banks of River Nahe - between villages of **Schlossböckelheim** and Bad Kreuznach. Steep/S-facing.
- *Riesling* - between Mosel + fuller-bodied styles = pronounced acidity/riper fruit (warmer climate)

## Rheingau

- Banks of River Rhine and River Main (North) with S-facing aspect. Protected by **Taunus Hills**. Optimal ripening conditions.
- Best sites = West - by **Johannisburg** and **Rüdesheim**
  - *Riesling* = Dry/med-full body/peach flavours
  - Humid = BA + TBA made here
- East- vineyards near Hochheim
  - *Riesling* - riper/fuller-bodied (better climate)
  - Assmannshausen (W. of Rüdesheim) - *Spätburgunder* produced
  - GG = *Riesling* or *Spätburgunder*

## Rheinhessen

- Largest vine-growing region
- *Müller-Thurgau/Riesling* = most planted. *Dornfelder/Portugeiser/Spätburgunder* - 30% of planting.
- Rheinterrasse = steep slopes by River Rhine by **Nierstein** (high rep)
  - Full-bodied *Rieslings*
- Typical non-high rep areas (ie, Worms SE) producing high quality now
- GG = *Riesling/Spätburgunder*

## Pfalz

- 2nd largest region
- Extension of Alsace - 80km strip N of French border. E of Haardt Mountains (Vosges). Dry/warm region. Risk: water stress.
- Whites - *Riesling/Müller-Thurgau/Grauburgunder/WeiBurgunder*
- Black - *Dornfelder, Portugeiser/Spätburgunder*
- GG = *Riesling/Spätburgunder*
- Best sites = **Mittelhardt (Forst/Deidesheim)**
  - W of villages/steep slope = ripe/full-bodied *Riesling*
- Majority wines = dry style

## Baden

- Warmest/Southernly - full-bodied/highest alcohol wines
- Vineyards narrow strip, Rhine down to Swiss border
- 1/3rd of plantings opposite Colmar (Alsace) = Kaiserstuhl
- Best sites = on S-facing slope of Kaiserstuhl (extinct volcano)
  - High rep - good quality *Spätburgunder* (most planted variety in Baden). The *Müller-Thurgau, Grauburgunder, WeiBurgunder, Riesling*.

- GG = white and black varieties

## Franken

- Silvaner dominates = **early flowering + ripening - susceptible to frost so planted on warmest sites**
    - Good concentration
  - Best wines = S-facing slopes of **Würzburg** - dry/rich/earthy
  - GG = *Silvaner, Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder, Spätburgunder*
- 

# German Wine Laws and Labels

## Wine Laws

- 'Deutscher Wein' = wine with no PGI
- PDO - 13 regions - classified by minimum must weight at harvest
- Qualitätswein + Prädikatswein (6 Prädikat categories)

## Wine Labels

All PDO wines from one region. Prädikat level appears if applicable. Varietal labelling common. Will include:

- 1. Sweetness**
  - a. 'Trocken' = dry
  - b. 'Halbtrocken' = off-dry (producers label as 'Feinherb' to avoid negative connotation - not legally defined)
  - c. Wine sweetness determined by (a) category or (b) alcohol level
- 2. Vineyard location**
  - a. Name of village + name of vineyard (ie, Piesporter Goldtropfchen)
  - b. Lower quality wines can be labelled same way
  - c. Retail price quality indicator
- 3. Indications of quality**
  - a. No premier/Grand Cru. Instead Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter (VDP) group classified best vineyard sites -- Grosses Gewächs = GG/grapes on label - best dry Qualitätswein

## Multiple Choice Practice Questions

- 1) Which grape variety is most commonly associated with the production of quality German

Riesling wines?

- a) Chardonnay
- b) Sauvignon Blanc
- c) Riesling
- d) Pinot Grigio

2) What will the best dry Qualitätsweine be labelled as?

- a) Grosses Gewachs
- b) Deutscher Wein
- c) Piesporter
- d) Rivaner

3) What is the highest quality designation in the German wine classification system, indicating wines made from fully ripe grapes with natural sweetness?

- a) Kabinett
- b) Spätlese
- c) Auslese
- d) Trockenbeerenauslese

4) Which of the following is NOT a major wine-producing region in Germany?

- a) Mosel
- b) Rheingau
- c) Languedoc
- d) Pfalz

5) In German wine regions, why is vineyard aspect (slope orientation) crucial for grape ripening?

- a) It affects soil composition
- b) It influences sunlight exposure
- c) It determines grape variety
- d) It regulates rainfall

6) In what German wine region would you find the village of Schlossböckelheim?

- a) Pfalz
- b) Nahe
- c) Mosel
- d) Baden

7) What is Eiswein?

- a) A type of red wine from Mosel
- b) Wine made from pressed frozen grapes
- c) Wine made from early harvested grapes
- d) German wines that are heavily oaked

8) In which of the following wines is noble rot an essential part of the winemaking process?

- a) Kabinett
- b) Spätlese

- c) Auslese
- d) Beerenauslese

9) While Riesling dominates white wine production in Germany, which red grape variety is notable, particularly in the Pfalz region?

- a) Pinot Noir (Spätburgunder)
- b) Merlot
- c) Cabernet Sauvignon
- d) Syrah

10) What is the overall climate of German wine regions?

- a) Alpine
- b) Cool continental
- c) Warm Mediterranean
- d) Warm continental

### Answers

**1. c) Riesling**

**2. a) Grosses Gewachs**

**3. d) Trockenbeerenauslese**

**4. c) Languedoc**

**5. c) It influences sunlight exposure**

**6. b) Nahe**

**7. b) Wine made from pressed frozen grapes**

**8. d) Beerenauslese**

**9. a) Pinot Noir (Spätburgunder)**

**10. b) Cool continental**